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OPEN LETTERS*



*A LEAGUE OF MIND*

*LETTERS OF*

HENRI FOCILLON — SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA — GILBERT MURRAY  
MIGUEL OZORIO DE ALMEIDA — ALFONSO REYES — TSAI YUAN PEI  
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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION  
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

1933



# *INTRODUCTION*

BY

MM. PAUL VALÉRY and HENRI FOCILLON





**T**HE League of Nations has decided “to instigate a Correspondence between the qualified representatives of higher intellectual activity”, and has charged the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation with the responsibility of assuring its publication.

*The first subject envisaged for discussion may be summed up as follows :*

*Could not those whose function it is to produce and organize ideas, giving them life through expression, come to an understanding so as to ensure the representation and action of the intellectual “order” in the general life ? Of what character ought this “order” to be and what place, beyond the interests of class, party*

*and nation, could it occupy in the contemporary world ?*

*Mr. Paul Valéry and Professor Henri Focillon, two members of the League of Nations' Permanent Committee on Arts and Letters, have been persuaded to evolve ideas which at the Committee's request they have formulated in the following introductory statement. This is followed by replies from Mr. Alfonso Reyes and Mr. Ozorio de Almeida, as well as an exchange of letters to which it gave rise between Mr. Tsai Yuan Pei and Professor Gilbert Murray on one hand and between Mr. Salvador de Madariaga and Mr. Paul Valéry himself on the other. A second exchange of letters—between Professor Einstein and Professor Freud—is being published in the next volume of this series.*

“By inviting men of thought to consult amongst themselves and to exchange views on the great problems of the life of the mind, on the present and on the future of intellectual activity, the League of Nations is carrying

## INTRODUCTION

one of its essential aims into practice. Not only is it difficult for it, without the collaboration of these masters, to act efficaciously either as a principle or as an organ of union of the peoples, but every effort to substitute the rules of reason for the combining of interest and the disorder of passions in the political domain is doomed to uncertainty and decay unless it rests on fundamental agreement between intelligences. The League of Nations wants to be able to group about itself the men who are most capable of illuminating the world's consciousness and illuminating each other's minds at a particularly grave hour in the world's existence. It has never hoped to establish a unified (possibly monotonous) accord between the thoughts of men. That would not be desirable. It is well that ideas should differ with the man, the age, the conditions, the surroundings, and there is not only one way of thinking. Variety is even a necessary and natural condition of vitality. But it matters very much that those precious fine shades of thought should not materialize

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

as obstacles, should not harden in isolation, should not become impervious to change. "The League of Nations assumes that there is a League of Minds."

The League of Minds is not a fiction. It has always existed, though with varying strength according to the period. The essence even of the thought that is most solitary, that is elaborated in the greatest secrecy and the most jealous independence, is communication of itself, is its power to stir far-off harmonies and affinities or even the contrary reactions that vindicate its quality. Thus, the history of civilization and the life of civilization is made up, not only of public acts and written documents, but of enormous numbers of mute dialogues and conversations without words between those who think. Superimposed on this network is another, which consists of conscious exchanges, of understandings—accidental or methodical—of colloquies, of correspondence. In our own time we have seen the necessities of scientific research outlining and bringing into existence the different institu-

## INTRODUCTION

tions of a kind of city of intellect that is spread over the whole earth. The interests of science, the intellectual interests of men of science, constituting a scattered nation that is nevertheless more solid and more compact than certain political formations, are aware of themselves, are thought out, organized and defended with remarkable vigour and lucidity. The League of Nations has done much in that order of ideas. Wherever an organ of liaison seemed to be in danger of collapsing it has set it up again and maintained it. It was aided in this task by the powerful bonds that are forged for a single group of seekers, of which the members are scattered over the entire planet, by common discipline, specified techniques and the clearly defined exigencies of given needs. Laboratory research, like the processes through which metals are put in factories, implies division of labour and the standardization of instruments—expression, these, of considered agreement and a common order.

But there are problems which have not yet

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

defined their technique and which are not to be treated in factories. They are, at once, very urgent and very general. They concern *all* man, and concern also, if one may put it so, the risk to his higher destiny. Every critical epoch poses them with insistence and in such fashion that they become almost an obsession. It is about them that the League of Minds is always crystallized. And, no more than the scientists, are politicians able to solve them with the mere resources at their command. They must have recourse to all those who think in terms of man, his condition, his future, man in the past and man in the present, in poetic life and in fiction as in the life of history and philosophic meditation. What do we want to do with man and what man do we want to produce ? Neither the doctrine nor the method will emerge from a parliamentary debate. Yet the parliaments need to know, if it be true that the art of government supposes not only knowledge of the secret springs of the human soul, but at least a vague idea of the aims of social existence. It was for no other

## INTRODUCTION

reason that, in the most virulent periods of the League of Minds, the masters of the Renaissance, the founders of classical thought, the *philosophes* of the XVIIIth century, questioned each other, corresponded, engaged in controversy. The notion of a "Republic of Letters" is not to be applied to a professional group, but to men diversely penetrated with a unique feeling for the great urgencies of the mind, men consecrated in essence to intellectual action and organized so as to ensure its efficacy.

In the past, the best instrument of this organization, for the exchange of views that it constantly demands, was *correspondence*. Nominally this took place between two men and, as it stands, it is admirable in its abundance, its regularity and, more especially, its tone. In reality it was addressed to a wider public. It circulated, was commented upon, was a semi-public expression of the confidences of the mind. It went from person to person but it resounded beyond the circles in which it was read. It may be maintained that were



the history of the intelligence known to us only by these kinds of letter we should, nevertheless, be pretty well able to grasp its essential aspects from them. In any case they give them to us in a warmer, livelier form than works deliberately contrived to offer resistance to time. We perceive in them the quality of a sketch (the quality of which the true painter is proudest and most jealous). It is not there merely for the delectation of the lettered, it is the sign of authenticity, the mark of high passion strongly experienced.

We are trying to bring this antique means of exchange back to life—not in order to resuscitate a *genre*, but to allow of a debate. Enquiries are collections of opinions. The reader is free to compare them, to mix them up, but the authors write for themselves or for their public. The same is true of reviews and of diverse periodicals. They are like provisional anthologies or collections of information. The press is far from having replaced everything. Polemics are not correspondence. We need written conventicles. A letter is the

## INTRODUCTION

work not only of the man who writes it but of the man to whom it is addressed. It is a dialogue even before it is answered. Even made public, even if intended to be made public, it retains this special quality. Only the bad actor turns from his fellow-player and, seeking for effect, plays to the gallery. This snare, this danger, does not menace either the correspondents or the readers in the present case.

It was a first part of the task of the League of Nations to set up organs for the unification of efforts and co-ordination of methods of work, in order to facilitate research. These organs are functioning. It will now be possible for it to tackle another essential piece of work, the study of problems concerning man. In founding the League of Minds and the new Republic of Letters, the League of Nations means to respect unique qualities ; in asking some thinkers to agree to an exchange of letters, to choose, each one, his own correspondent, known or unknown, because he seems an affinity or because he

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

has the attraction of an opposite, the League hopes for variety. An idea in itself is not enough. The manner in which it is received by men capable of welcoming it and for whom it has been specially formulated, counts also. Thus a kind of counterpoint is substituted for pure parallelism and theoretic objection.

The first problem we submit to corresponding authors is the more general. In the present state of the world, what is the role of mind and what ought it to be ? All modern activities, and politics and economics to a singular degree, are dominated and commanded by mythical ideologies. On the other hand men exist whose function it is to produce and organize ideas and to give them life in expression. Could they not agree to substitute, at least for themselves, firmer and higher views for these systems and that inferior vocabulary, and so form an intellectual "order". This "order" is not altogether defined by the notion of class. It has more general and more urgent interest than corporate ones, to be studied and defended on the international

## INTRODUCTION

plane by the League of Nations. What will become of the man of thought if the intellectual order is not well defined, if it is not established that beyond the animality of instinct, beyond the interests of class, party and nation, there are higher interests, for which the intellectual order is responsible ?

If these questions were to remain unanswered or if the discussions they raised were interpreted as a pure play of the intelligence, it would be clear (as many people tend to believe is the case) that thought is not the rule of civilization but merely an ornament, and we would see a clarification and a hardening of the antagonism of two humanities—the one living according to the dictates of mind, holding aloof or mixing in affairs only to bring about its own decline, the other living by instinct and under the empire of interests vulgarly formulated as to doctrine and tolerating mind only as an added luxury.”



**ALFONSO REYES**



TO MM. PAUL VALÉRY AND HENRI FOCILLON.

*Mexico.*

Messieurs,

**I** have just received a copy of the appeal that, under that aegis of the Permanent Committee of Arts and Letters of the League of Nations, you have launched.

It is a matter of problems seriously posed for the consideration of intellectuals by the institution which includes the greatest number of representatives of the governments of the whole world. Such an appeal, then, indicates that without a League of Minds there is no League of Nations, that at the present time, when the magnitude and importance of technical problems are tending to disturb consciences and rouse lively uneasiness as to the future of civilization, it is important to give



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

exchanges of thought a better organization and to put more energy and perseverance into the conduct of them.

The statement of the first problem is, in itself, touching :

In the present state of the world what is the role of the intellectual order, and what ought it to be ? What is it that unites, what is it that divides, the intellectual and political orders ? An intellectual "order" in no way implies the odious and out of date notion of class, caste or sect of initiates. There are more general and more urgent interest than the corporative interests which, up to the present, have constituted the exclusive domain of the League of Nations. Beyond these class, party and national interests, are the higher interests of man, those, that is to say, for which the intellectual order ought to assume responsibility.

Not to reply to this honourable invitation or to turn the discussion into a mere academic game, would be to be guilty of desertion, to abandon civilization to chance and also impli-

citly to admit an antagonism between two humanities, one living according to the dictates of mind, aloof from activity, like some sterile plant, the other governed by instinct and arbitrarily setting up the most vulgar appetites as doctrines.

I should like to insist that in America, in the whole of our America, there are a few hundred men who are more and more determined from one day to another, that it is not mere hazard that is going to govern us.

Amongst us, intelligence has, happily, not had the time to break with action and all its stimuli as it has had in countries exhausted by very old civilizations where one may build towers of ivory or set up fantastic theories according to which the man of thought who participates in the life of his time is regarded as a traitor to thought (1). With us, scientists are still forced to become public figures—a

(1) It is true that, faced with concrete cases, Benda finds a means of repenting without confessing, and rectifying his own error, as for instance in the case of T.G. Masaryk, the celebrated sociologist, at present President of the Czechoslovak Republic.

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

disadvantage at certain periods of history, as no doubt it is a disadvantage to-day from the point of view of pure thought—but a circumstance, nevertheless, that gives us an unquestionable advantage. It is not, of course, an advantage of which we shall reap the benefits to-day or to-morrow. It is rather a question of evolution over a long period. A maturing process such as we are concerned with here may not—I am tempted to say unfortunately—be hastened by violence. No! What matters in such a process is the direction acquired. And it is precisely that direction which is already beginning to outline itself. And the advantage to which we have alluded, the discounted advantage, will be that every man who has followed a spiritual discipline, a culture, a technique, from the philosopher to the artisan, everyone who has struggled with himself in order to acquire true knowledge or a true formation, and who has consequently passed his moral tests, will one day grasp at dreams in order to achieve the happiness of the American man and the American man will

be able to turn in his struggles to absolutely responsible directors. For it is only where there is full responsibility that there is full consciousness.

Let us understand each other. To let oneself drift into childish optimism would be mere cowardice. The best thing, for the absolute intellectual and for the intelligence, is to carry oneself modestly with regard to action and to participate in it only to the indispensable degree, reserving only the roles of counsellor and guide. But at the moment of danger the captain of the ship himself will give a hand at the steer, at the pumps, at the ropes. One or two generations of intellectuals will be sacrificed to the new league. Let us hope that the privilege will be accorded to a few—for the results will be precious for the whole of humanity—to remain rather

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

aloof so as to preserve the treasures of acquired culture and save them in their entirety for the generations to come after. In Russia, in that Russia which is a prey to transformations that are invading and overthrowing everything, a scientist like Pavlov has been allowed to remain sheltered from the storm for long years that, for the benefit of science in the future, he may pursue his study of one single biological phenomenon, the reflexes of salivation in dogs. As for the others, those who are not Pavlovs, they must make a virtue of necessity and mix with the crowd, they must, I mean to say, resolutely participate in the social unrest of their time and bring to it their vision and their will, their theories and their practice. Let them not allow mere rancour and mere despair to break the mould of the society of to-morrow.

Intelligence must excavate its own road, must vindicate its position from the first line trenches. As for those who are made for no other business than that of ideas and do not know how to deal with men, let them recall

ALFONSO REYES

the popular saying which teaches them “to have their hearts in their bellies.” Gœthe has said, “It is not enough to know, it is necessary to apply knowledge. It is not enough to will, it is necessary to act.”

Alfonso REYES.



**MIGUEL OZORIO DE ALMEIDA**





TO MM. PAUL VALÉRY AND HENRI FOCILLON.

*Rio de Janeiro.*

Messieurs,

YOUR proposal of a correspondence between men who live the life of the mind, of an exchange of ideas on the serious problems with which intellectuals are confronted, cannot, on close examination, but be approved. True, the question immediately arises whether the letter is capable of being made a deeper, more truthful, more sincere, more significant means of expression than work destined for publication. Can it be turned into something more interesting than an exchange of views at a series of small meetings ?

There can be no doubt about the answer to the latter question. Intellectual co-opera-

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

tion, according to your project, is not to be confined to the thinkers of a single city or a single country, and material considerations would make it all but impossible to hold meetings between thinkers of countries so far from each other as France and Brazil, Norway and China, with the frequency to be desired. Besides, at such meetings, a great deal is necessarily left to the inspiration of the moment. Improvisation may not alter the basis of thought itself but assuredly it affects the form of expression and if, on the one hand, it sometimes produces brilliant results and the stir of seeing ideas coming to birth, it may, on the other hand, be a source of confusion for minds which, without being less profound, move less quickly. These meetings when they are held are extremely useful but it is unquestionably necessary that they be repeated at certain intervals and that time, all the time necessary, be allowed for the accomplishment of the long and, to all intents and purposes, uncontrollable work of meditation.

This meditation may, however, be undertaken at leisure if all one has to do is write a letter. One takes one's time, time not given to the work of composition as in the preparation of a book or an article for a review, to work which, owing to considerations of style and the necessity for linking up ideas, too often results in the distortion of one's thought, but time consecrated to the realization of the effort necessary for seeing clearly into oneself, to the mastering of the elements of a given problem. The letter does not inspire fear lest one may not be properly situated to discuss matters which often are not, which by their nature cannot possibly be, defined, for the benefit of the greater public. We are not frightened at the thought of contradictions in a letter, since contradiction is and will always be one of the letter's cherished characteristics. Similarly with repetition. In a series of letters, even in the same letter, there is no objection to coming back to an idea again and again, discussing now one aspect of it and now another, and so, by presenting it

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

under different forms, working it out to all its conclusions.

The letter allows considerably more elasticity of ideas, more taking up and dropping of such opinions as are only in process of formation, as are not yet crystallized. And anyhow, what really intellectual man would set up the definite crystallization of his views as an ideal ? Is it not precisely an eternal mobility, an imperious need to be always beginning again, to keep going back on what seems achieved, to be restarting something that has stopped, that constitutes the charm and the richness of the greater life of the mind ?

Here, perhaps, is a reason why the great public is sometimes deceived in great thinkers. For the great public looks for decided, well-defined, limpidly clear opinions, and really sincere intellectuals are not always in a position to provide them. Doubt is only too often sensed behind the statement that is followed by a whole series of qualifications which limit its application. And superior minds are specially likely to be misunderstood, when

rich with thought and possessed by some great, finely evolved idea, they succeed in presenting it before the great public with a sincerity comparable to that which is so relatively easy to achieve in a letter. In any case, their influence is invariably confronted with great obstacles.

Will all I have just said be taken as applauding the formation of an *élite* of the kind that is practically inaccessible, practically closed, to the great masses ? Shall we be accused, you, Sir, to begin with, Monsieur Focillon also, and we others who follow you, of showing an anti-democratic spirit ? There is no evidence that you had any such preoccupation in formulating your proposition. And indeed there was no necessity for it. It is not a restriction on the activity of intellectuals that you suggest. On the contrary, you provide new means of rendering their activity more effective. You suppress nothing. Books will go on being published. Reviews will continue to circulate. You bring back another means of expression, that is all. You are but giving

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

shape to something that already exists. You propose to give it official recognition. You are trying to organize it. In spite of all the facilities for publication, we had arrived at a somewhat paradoxical situation, in which writers were, to a certain extent, isolated and, more especially, were finding difficulty in establishing frank contact with each other. All you are trying to do is throw down the barriers and put different personalities in touch with each other. Consequently the public will not be deprived of the more or less fecund results of the work of the mind, just as it is not deprived of the work of an isolated intelligence though for a time this goes on invisibly, impalpably.

Reading over the questions you put regarding the role of the intellectual order in political life, in the life of nations, in the conduct of affairs, I am tempted to withdraw. I do not believe that I am capable of forming precise ideas on these subjects. You will notice a certain indecision in my opinions. Still, you are kind enough to wish to take them

into consideration. There, perhaps, is where the essential advantage of the letter form lies.

To consider problems of the kind adequately it is sometimes well to go to extremes. The distortions of extreme cases can help up to an understanding of the more normal cases we meet in everyday life.

Let us then imagine an extremely intelligent man or rather group of men in the service of the state. Let us imagine them charged with the study of important questions and assured that the solutions they offer will be put into practice. Let us imagine further that they set only their intelligence, only their reasoning capacity, to work, that they reject every consideration based on such feelings as are not plainly demonstrable. Would they be able to follow a steadily coherent line of action? Would they be able to suggest any line of action whatever? I rather doubt it. Mr. Paul Valéry has said it : "One must be either incredibly stupid or incredibly ignorant to dare to have an opinion about most of the problems that arise in politics."



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

The main political and social questions are too complex for the greater, purer intelligences. Such intelligences are lost in the chaos of things that seem to them to be disconnected. They do not find enough elements of proof to enable them to come to precise conclusions. They have too wide a field of vision, and beside an image that they are trying to discern clearly there is a whole paraphernalia of elements that blur and discolour it for them. The fatal result of their state of mind is indecision, hesitation, the perpetual postponement of a solution. And action, in one direction or the other, must be taken, may not wait. It seems to me that the pure intellectual may not act. But this state of impotence, even if it be considered as a characteristic of the pure intellectual—a type to which this man or that may approximate but which does not really exist—might be very useful, might even be fundamental to the life of states and international relations. There would lie the possibility of an action of inhibition which has not yet been made sufficiently present to

consciousness. It is easier for intellectuals to destroy beliefs than to create them. They may quite well not know what ought to be done but they nearly always know what ought not to be done. They are not easily blinded by passion and could easily ensure that words of calmness and appeasement should be heard at the right time.

The great weakness of intellectuals would be that they do not represent an "order" in the strict sense of the word. Their contribution is rather a method of work, a state of mind, a discipline and a manner of being than fully determined results of their work ready to be put into application. Continual and indefinite research is their real domain. Naturally discontented with things as they are, they more or less neglect the present or at any rate the present state of knowledge. The greater social questions, especially political questions, support this attitude of the seeker with difficulty. They have to be worked out on more solid ground. The slippery ground of knowledge in formation does not suit them. The

intellectual would base everything on knowledge. He wants first of all to know. But in the majority of cases he can only arrive at incomplete and partial knowledge. In the end he is almost glad, since he may thus go on with his favourite work of research. But others, those who have not the same educational equipment as he, those on whom rests the immediate responsibility for action, feel put out, rather lost, in this eternal wait. Thus, what, for these, constitutes the very essence of things, represents, for those, only their theoretical, what might be called their academic, aspect.

There is, very rapidly outlined, what it seems logical to admit as a consequence of the extreme cases referred to earlier. But in reality we have not to deal with such difficult cases. The rigour and intransigence of the mind could not find wide application even in the domain where it seemed at first they would find no obstacle to their development. Concessions had to be made, compromise accepted. The pure intelligence has often abdicated what

it believed to be its exclusive rights. It has entered into more or less close relations with other elements. This has been more especially noticeable in the sciences.

There have been scientists, great scientists even, who declared that they did not consider themselves intellectuals. In scientific circles one easily gains the impression that the intelligence is always distrusted. True, intelligence is the basis of all research, but it is well known that it must always be controlled. It is approached warily, its liberty is restricted, it is subjected to new tests at every turn.

The great development of the experimental method—the fecundity of which may no longer be questioned—has had, as one of its characteristics, the partial subjection of the intelligence. It submits to the results of observation and experience, it submits to facts. The fact appears as the manifestation of laws and submission to facts represents nothing but ineluctable submission to the law. For the most part the intelligence is limited to filling its role in adopting such means as are

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

necessary to elucidate the facts, such methods as will bring them to light.

But would the attitude of mind that characterizes the great mass of scientific workers be of great utility in the world of generalities ? It might constitute a rather interesting basis for wide understandings. It is not only the clear, well-defined direction of scientific research that is at the bottom of the mutual comprehension that exists amongst men of science and that has united scientific workers in a fairly solid group though scattered over the surface of the earth. It is also a sort of tacit code, subscribed to by all and represented by an attitude from which prejudice has been eliminated, which is impartial, to the objects that are interesting to knowledge.

It may not be denied that the absence of the spirit of system and submission to the law—understood that the latter is recognized to be true and legitimate—would not be advantages to the conduct of great social and political affairs.

There again, however, there would be diffi-

culties which must not be disguised. Even in purely scientific questions the subjection of the intelligence is more apparent than real. The intelligence vindicates itself the moment one begins to classify facts and it becomes necessary to attribute the order of their importance to them. If this importance does not emerge at once in possibilities of practical application, the criterion of evaluation will soon establish the nature of the theoretic conceptions. The intellectual resumes his rights. Reasoned interpretation reappears, more or less elastic, but also more or less free. The law itself loses much of its rigidity. It may be despoiled of its real signification and limit itself to the state of simple approximation or of superficial manifestation of hidden and deeper things. The rigid discipline of the intelligence may not be too long maintained. Laws are reduced in precision and prestige as the questions treated become vaster and more general. A certain rigour may only be attained in dealing with problems concerning objects that are simple and few in number.

The great world of general affairs is not one of these.

You will see then how difficult I find it to answer your first question as to the roll the intellectual order should fill, how difficult it is—you have yourself given it to be understood that it is difficult—even to define it. Nevertheless I do not feel tempted to admit that the intellectual order—let us continue to call it that for convenience sake—is only characterized by negations and doubts. For thousands of years it has been little by little in process of formation and development, and, in spite of everything, has progressed. And if one ought to have faith in anything in this world it is in the greater and greater intensification of this progress and the acceleration of this movement. It is the great lesson of history and if one does not let oneself give in to pessimism, too easily the results achieved will seem slight only because we measure them in relation to what remains to be achieved. If we change our point of view and transport ourselves in imagination to the past, we shall

perhaps be more indulgent on the subject of what we already possess.

What is there then behind the intellectual order which escapes us when we want to grasp things too closely ? Perhaps only things that are very elementary, very simple—and for that very reason difficult to discern. Perhaps, quite simply, nothing more than great good will and, more especially, an absolute respect for truth.

In the present state of things love of and respect for truth that may not be represented as the essential characteristics of social, political and international affairs. The fact that for the greater part of the time one does not know where truth lies, may to a certain extent justify this state of mind. But there precisely is what might distinguish the intellectual order from other orders. Truth ought to be respected even before it is found out. Or at least, in the true life of the mind, it cannot be admitted that unknown truths should be replaced, even provisionally, by lying affirmations that are given for true. As experi-



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

ment, one may admit efforts at more or less probable, more or less approximate, constructions, but only on condition that there be no illusion as to their precarious character. And above all one must not try to create illusion in others with regard to them.

Love of truth and the continued, persistent effort to make truth known—an effort which may not be made without absolute sincerity and great good will—these then are the great, *new* (let us not shrink from the boldness of the term) element, the great contribution that the intellectual order can bring into the reorganization of great general affairs. That respect for truth takes form slowly in individuals, more especially in children. It is a matter for very careful, very tenacious education.

It is slower still in forming itself in peoples and in the masses. Too often it is forgotten by those in charge. It is what intellectuals defend jealously and, in reality, liberty of thought is nothing else but the right to respect and love truth, and to seek it by all possible means.

Monsieur Claparède, the eminent philosopher of Geneva, recently delivered a lecture to the Paris Philosophical Society, in which he invited philosophers to take combined action against lying. I wholeheartedly join the rally to his views.

The intellectual order, so difficult to characterize, has perhaps only one sure and solid basis. It is that love of truth which may be clothed in many different dresses, but which fully manifests itself in the passion for research whether that research be purely scientific or philosophic or even artistic. That basis of the intellectual order is a perfect justification of the order's existence and authorizes the intellectuals to defend it and support every effort for its unlimited development. It is perhaps

that basis which has set up a barrier against closer relations between the intellectual and political orders, but there is no question that it must be the latter that gives in and little by little conforms to the former. Nobody can estimate from now on, all that politics, whether national politics or international politics, will gain if we succeed in introducing into them, if not a little more truth, at least a little more respect for truth, a little more sincerity and good will.

The task of the intellectuals will be long and arduous. It is a task of patient and painful education, that of leading the greatest possible number of men to recognize, not only in words but in deeds, the fundamental importance of this thing which is at the foundation of everything and which nevertheless is constantly forgotten : Truth.

Is it not in this attitude towards truth that, "beyond the interests of classes, parties and nations, the superior interests of mankind, for which the intellectual order is responsible," reside ?

**MIGUEL OZORIO DE ALMEIDA**

Fearing to take up too much of your time,  
I stop. And I beg that you will accept the  
very sincere expression of my admiration and  
highest regard.

**Miguel Ozorio DE ALMEIDA.**



**TSAI YUAN PEI**



TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
ON INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION

*Academia Sinica (Shanghai).*

My dear President,

IT was very kind of you to ask me to join in the discussion on the role of intellectuals in international life, which will serve as the starting point for future "Correspondence" as visualized by the Committee of Arts and Letters. With regard to this interesting topic, I should like to suggest the following for discussion.

In the book *Ta Hsueh* (The Great Learning), we find a unifying conception of world order which seeks to lay its foundation in the psychology of the individual. This book was written two thousand years ago by Tseng Ts'an, a disciple of Confucius, later incorporated in the *Li-Ki* by the Han Scholars, and



finally chosen, as one of the Four Books to be studied by every schoolboy, by the scholars of the Sung Dynasty. Dr. Sun Yat Sen in his "Sanmin Doctrine" also regards this book as containing a most profound political philosophy. The passage I wish to refer to reads as follows :

"In ancient times, those who wished to make clear their virtue before the world would first put their country in order ; those who wished to put their country in order would first bring about right relationships in their family ; those who wished to bring about right relationships in their family would first cultivate their own self ; those who wished to cultivate their own self would first rectify their own heart ; those who wished to rectify their own heart would first make their will sincere ; and those who wished to make their will sincere would first try to attain knowledge and they would attain knowledge by studying matter.

"When matter is studied, then knowledge may be attained ; when knowledge is attained, then the will becomes sincere ; when the will

is sincere, then the heart is rectified ; when the heart is rectified, then the self is cultivated ; when the self is cultivated, then there exist right relationships in the family ; when right relationships exist in the family, then the country is in order ; when the countries are in order, then there is peace in the world.”

It will be seen that in the first paragraph quoted above, a rational world order is first stated as the object and then the writer proceeds to describe the method by which this object is to be attained—not only by attending to smaller units of human society of which the individual is the irreducible element, but also extending the study of the individual from his conduct to his mind in the last analysis. The problem of virtue is thus reduced to a problem of knowledge, which is thus seen to be the final basis of world order. In the second paragraph, the reverse process from cause to effect is again successively traced, from knowledge as the starting point to the attainment of a rational world order as the final end. This end to be aimed at is

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

described as "world peace", while the method of attaining this peace begins with "making clear one's virtue before the world". This virtue is regarded as rational conduct, and proceeds, neither from superstition, nor from blind acceptance, but from the exercise of intelligence. The development of intelligence is again described as the attainment of knowledge through the objective study of matter. It is therefore characteristically free from theological and metaphysical fancies.

The conception of world order was further elucidated in the Kung-Yang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals. According to Kung-Yang, a Confucianist, there are three stages in the development of world order, as follows :

"In a world of chaos, every one is loyal to his own state but hostile to the other Chinese states ; in the secondary stage of world peace, every one is loyal to the Chinese states, while hostile to those outside China ; in the final stage of world peace, all the barbarian (non-Chinese) states, large and small, far and near,

have come up to the same level of civilization, and every citizen conducts himself as a perfect gentleman.”

Expressed in modern terminology, the first stage is the stage of nationalism ; the second stage, when one is loyal to all the Chinese states while hostile to the others may be regarded as rather similar to the American Monroe doctrine and the conception of a federation of Europe ; the final stage is more or less foreshadowed by the League of Nations.

“Peace” is thus regarded as a stage when all the large and small, distant and near states are treated alike. The final reference to every citizen conducting himself as a perfect gentleman points to the stage when all should be so mentally disciplined that they can successively form the ever-widening units which culminate in a world of universal peace.

European philosophers have evolved theories wherein either individual liberty or state sovereignty is pushed to the extreme, both of which are incomprehensible to the Chinese mind. The Chinese scholars think that the

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

successive units of human society—from the cell to the individual, the group and the higher groups like the state and the world—differ in size and complexity, but not in their behaviour. What is regarded as good or evil in a small unit is also regarded in the same way in the larger units. Chinese scholars are sincerely puzzled when one holds that honesty is a virtue as between individuals but could be ignored in international diplomacy ; that while mutual consideration, as stated in the Confucian or Christian Golden Rule, should be the rule for intercourse between individuals, the reverse attitude of aggression and whole-sale slaughter should be countenanced ; that while selfishness is regarded as a shame and self-sacrifice a virtue in individual conduct, self-aggrandizement should be the norm for international policies ; that while in individual conduct chivalry consists in helping the weak and defenceless, the dictum that might is right should be accepted as the rule in international relationships.

The League of Nations is, I believe,

committed to a new conception of world order and dedicated as an instrument to abolish dishonesty, unkindness, unrighteousness and lack of mutual consideration from international politics. The International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation has especially the duty of bringing about the support of the scholars of the world for this new conception. If it is accepted that the successive units of human society are causally related as described in the above, then we may deduce two principles which are worthy of our effort and may well cover our multifarious activities :

(1) All supporters of the idea of Intellectual Co-operation should try to live up to the norm of individual conduct, which will thus serve as the ideal for group conduct also.

(2) All should co-operate in the work of objective study and investigation of facts bearing on all international problems, analyze the causes and effects and on the strength of this objective study make recommendations for the consideration of the proper authorities.

I believe the above two proposals are well

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

in accord with the Confucian political philosophy and with the aims and objects of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation.

I should be highly pleased to hear your opinion on these proposals, and wish to thank you and the other members of the Institute for the courtesy and goodwill towards the Chinese intellectual world. I promise to do my best as a supporter of the activities of your Institute.

With the most sincere regards,  
I am,

Yours sincerely,  
Tsai YUAN PEI.

**GILBERT MURRAY**





TO MR. TSAI YUAN PEI.

*Oxford.*

My dear President,

THE letter you sent me, as Chairman of the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, interested me so much, and your analysis of the proper function of that Committee seemed to me so bold and so exact, that I venture, on the strength of the sympathy which I feel to exist between us, to send you a personal letter.

Your letter lays stress on the moral remedy that is required for the present distresses of the world : the need for objective study of facts and for a high standard of individual conduct ; the need, in other words, for an effort by thoughtful people first to find out what is true and then to do what is right. I accept

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

this obligation as authoritative, and as the more valuable because it gives to each individual a task which it is within his power to pursue. But I would like to put before you another side of the present extraordinary situation. You will excuse me if I write, as I naturally must, from a European point of view.

### I

The age in which we live is steeped in paradox. In every nation people are discussing a probable downfall of civilization. That possibility in itself, however tragic, would not be unprecedented. Other civilizations have fallen before this. Prosperity has ebbed ; law and order have collapsed ; great multitudes have been unable to find food ; society has fallen under the power of criminals and nations of high culture been conquered by barbarians. Such things have happened several times in the course of history. But in all previous cases known to me—except perhaps where

the cause was some sudden military conquest—the downfall was heralded by warning symptoms and signs of failure. Man's power to control his environment grew in some way visibly less. Land went out of cultivation. Roads and aqueducts fell into disrepair. Floods and famines occurred and governments were unable to cope with them. The administration of justice became difficult or failed altogether. Allowing for a certain amount of ebb and flow, a public man in the later centuries of the Roman Empire could see clearly that in a dozen different ways man was weaker and things were worse than in his grandfather's time.

But to-day, when this strange terror is hanging over us, man's power over nature is not only incomparably greater than it has ever been before, but it is increasing month by month. The progress of scientific invention is dazzling ; the radio, the internal combustion engine, the conquest of the air, are in themselves enough to mark this as one of the most successful ages in history. The wealth of

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

the world, and its power of producing still more wealth, are rising to fabulous heights. Human life is lengthening, health is improving. Nor is the advance confined to material things. Pure science has advanced as much as applied science. Education is spreading. About art and music and literature there may be divergent opinions ; there always are ; but in the conduct of the individual life I can see at any rate no clear deterioration. Has charity ever been so abundant, so carefully organized ? Has there ever been, within homogeneous societies at any rate, so little oppression of the poor ? I admit the existence of temporary "crime waves", and of a certain lowering of the standard of honesty in the upper classes as a consequence of economic distress. But there is clearly no widespread demoralization of the sort that suggests social collapse.

Nay, more. If we compare the international ideals now accepted with those which were current fifty years ago, the change has been for the better, not the worse. In the last generation the average man still looked upon

War as a glorious occupation, and acquiesced in the description of the soldier's business as "the lordliest life on earth." Strong nations scouted the very idea of arbitrating their disputes with small nations. They would have felt ashamed of consenting to such a thing. Nowadays, all the nations, or almost all, have agreed to "renounce" War, as an outlawed and evil thing ; they have agreed to settle all their differences by peaceful means ; they have almost all accepted, for all legal disputes, the jurisdiction of the Hague International Court. It may be said that they cannot be fully trusted to fulfil their promises, but when could they ? They do not break their word more often or more flagrantly than they used in the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries : rather the reverse. How can it be that such a civilization—so rich, so strong, so splendid in achievement and aspiration, so largely unified in itself and so free from external enemies—seems to sober judges at this very moment threatened with death ?

II

It is not due to lack of wealth or power. It is not due to lack of intelligence or to any wide-spread demoralization. It is due to maladjustment, and chiefly to one fundamental and enormous maladjustment. In every conflict between the interest of civilization as a whole and that of some particular nation, the decision is in the hands of the particular nation. Where the whole and the part have, or seem to have, different interests the part wins. This is nothing new in itself : it is only the changed state of the world that has transformed it from a harmless lack of perfection to a mortal danger.

The advance of civilization has, as we all know, led to a vastly greater interdependence of nations upon one another. With few exceptions, every nation now depends upon others not merely for its continued culture and civilization, but actually for its livelihood.

The present economic crisis is a proof of it. This was not so in any previous century.

And at the same time, the general advance of which we have spoken has led to such an immense development of the weapons of destruction and—what is more important still—such an increase in the power of governments to concentrate their whole national resources upon the effort of war, that nations can now ruin and destroy one another to a degree that was not dreamed of in past ages.

That is to say : in our present state of Western Civilization nations must co-operate or they cannot continue ; they must never fight or they will almost instantaneously perish. All sensible people know this. Yet the nations are scarcely organized at all for co-operation, while they are splendidly organized for fighting. We are rudimentary in the art of continuing alive, we are past masters in the art of mutual destruction. That is where the maladjustment lies.



### III

As to the means of mutual destruction or collective suicide, the point is so clear that I need not dwell upon it. Every one of the Governments of the Great Powers, though it produces figures to prove at the Disarmament Conference that it has reduced its forces more than any other nation, boasts at its own naval and military functions that its killing power is greater than ever before. And the boast is true. Reduction of man power, where it has occurred, is much more than counter-balanced by improvement in machinery, such as tanks, big guns, and aeroplanes, and in projectiles, such as bombs filled with explosives, incendiary matter or poison gas. The treatment of poison gas is peculiarly symptomatic of our present state. A great chemist, Dr. Leonard Hill, has calculated that, if properly distributed, one saltspoonful of a certain gas-forming powder would suffice to kill a million

people. And the powder is not expensive nor yet hard to make. It is obvious that, as long as the deliberate military preparation of such gases continues, no nation is safe and every nation is a terror to every other. It is not the existence, or possible existence, of the gases that is so dangerous : by themselves they would not be more dangerous than water or fire or many other abundant natural substances which are capable of causing death. It is the deliberate preparation of them for military purposes that constitute the danger—or, may we say, the crime ?

If civilization is to continue, clearly the preparation of those gases must be stopped. If there were a world government, or if such a body as the Council of the League of Nations had real executive power, that would be done. But what actually happens is that the international body is defied and thwarted by the national bodies. At the League Council or any other international gathering all the representatives of the Governments agree that, in the common interest, the use of the

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

gases must be absolutely forbidden ; but as soon as the representatives get home their governments all proceed, not indeed to use the gases, for nobody wants to do that in peace time, but to study them, improve upon them, lay up great stores of them and make instruments and projectiles for large scale experiments with them . . . so as to be able to use them, if necessary. And of that necessity each nation will be its own judge. It will use the forbidden gases whenever, amid the passions and panics of war, it chooses to believe that the enemy has already done so, or has done something equally bad, or is going to do something worse unless stopped. The plain fact is that the forbidden gases are being produced, stored and prepared for action, and will, as a matter of course, be used if war breaks out.

Secret perjury is not a nice thing, but open and unashamed perjury cuts at the root of all confidence. The governments are all lying to one another and to their own peoples.

The history of the gases is the history of the

economic crisis over again. Every international conference saw that the obstacles to world trade ought to be reduced or removed ; every nation acting separately increased or stiffened them, till one after another has fallen into bankruptcy or acute distress. Collectively the nations see what is right in the interests of all, but collectively they have no power of action. For action each depends on its own parliament or government, which thinks only of its particular and immediate interest. Collectively they see and recommend what is right ; individually they do what is wrong.

How does this come about ? How can civilized nations and statesmen be so insane ?

#### IV

The reason is that while the civilized world is growing more and more a Unity this Unity has no organ of government. It is ruled by some sixty or more independent sovereign

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

states, each of whom had till a few years ago . . . and therefore has still in the minds of its average citizens . . . . no duty whatever towards its neighbours. Inside its own borders both the government and all its subjects were bound by the strictest laws : homicide, assault, arson, theft and even slander were considered wicked, forbidden and severely punished. But towards the people of any foreign state the Government had an undisputed right to do all these things. It had only to declare war : that is, declare its sovereign intention to commit slander, theft, assault, arson and homicide on the largest possible scale, and then it was free to do so. Other states of course could do the same to it, so that the international anarchy was to some extent controlled by mutual fear, and peace, intermittently and in a precarious way, preserved.

As we all know, by 1919 this state of things had become so intolerable and War so infinitely destructive that the Covenant of the League of Nations was signed and ratified

by most of the nations of the world, and the Council, the Assembly and the World Court came into operation. If governments, or the few most important governments, had really lived up to the undertakings of the Covenant ; if they had really disarmed, really “pooled their security” and regarded “any war or threat of war” in any part of the world as an attack on themselves ; really observed “open just and honourable dealings” with one another, and the like, Civilization would now be safe. But the organization of human society in national states has made such fair dealing difficult and statesmen have not been strong enough to correct it.

All custom, tradition and romance, almost all the unconscious influences of education, have been for hundreds of years directed towards the glorification of the Nation as the supreme object of loyalty, and the thwarting and, if possible, killing of foreign enemies as the most obvious and noble way of showing that loyalty. Such habits of thought were no doubt at one time beneficial to societies

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

and at some later times not particularly disastrous, though foolish : as things are now, their continued dominance means ruin. Yet they will be very hard to change.

In all countries—in dictatorships and monarchies as well as in democracies—statesmen depend for their power and office not on the goodwill of the world but on the favour of their own countrymen. Wherever the interests or ambitions of some particular country run contrary to the welfare of the world in general, the statesman who represents that country will have a choice. He may support the welfare of the world as a whole. Then the world as a whole will, no doubt, approve and admire him, but his own country will probably call him a weakling or a traitor and unhesitatingly dismiss him from office. If he wishes to stay in office he must act in such a way as to win votes in his own country. The approval of the world is of no practical value to him ; the favour of his countrymen is a matter of life and death.

This is the clue to our tragedy. The safety

of civilization depends on the great world issues being settled in accordance with the interests of the world : yet, under the system of national states, any statesman who attempted so to settle them would be facing great danger. For it is not the votes of other nations by which he stands or falls but only the votes of his own people.

“We are scarcely organized at all for co-operation : we are splendidly organized for mutual destruction.” Yet there are one or two points to be remembered on the other side.

First of all, the defect of which we have spoken is only a defect in machinery, and no political machinery is ever so perfect that it will work by itself, uncorrected by human wisdom. Our social system only works at all because human beings sometimes think and have consciences.



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

Human beings sometimes think and have consciences. As far as machinery goes, it would be to the interest of doctors that as many people as possible should be ill, to that of undertakers that as many as possible should die. But ordinary decent doctors and undertakers do not let their actions be dictated by that consideration, and we do not find that they are ruined by their high principles. May we not expect the same to be true of statesmen ? Must we expect them always to consider their own careers more important than the general interest of mankind ; and if they did think more of the general interest is it sure that their careers would suffer ?

After all, the gap in the machinery can be bridged by the human will. It is quite possible for statesmen to prefer the good of mankind to their own national or electoral interest, if they care to take the risk. By doing so, a really great statesman, with insight and international authority, could break through the miserable tangle of egoisms which now strangles us and enable the civilized world to save

itself. Since the Great War the world as a whole has not been fortunate in its governments. Nearly all the Great Powers have had their opportunity. France could by a great imaginative effort have used her supreme power and prestige for the reconciliation of peoples and not merely for consolidating her war gains. Great Britain, having almost no special interest at stake, could have done it very easily ; but none of her governments cared enough or thought enough. They were content simply to avoid trouble. Germany had the most brilliant opportunity of all. When she entered the League all eyes were upon her and were ready to welcome her as a saviour. She had nothing to lose and everything to gain by making herself the champion of world justice and the leader of all the forty or fifty smaller nations who wanted that and nothing but that.

None of them took their opportunity. To onlookers the failure seemed strange. We had expected them all to accept with joy and pride the conditions of that nobler and

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

friendlier international life to which they had all agreed. During the long agony of the war one single desire had formed in the hearts of all peoples, one practical and effective scheme taken shape in the deliberations of statesmen, that of a great Society in which the Nations should not only co-operate to save one another from war but should learn to abstain from the frauds and oppressions and false ideals which lead to war. That was the hope ; and, within limits, the hope was granted, the scheme carried through, the great Deliverance achieved. And now the Governments treat it not as a Deliverance but as a sort of tiresome complication, which cannot quite be repudiated but should be minimised and, on occasion, evaded !

I turn back, Mr. President, to your own letter ; and it emboldens me to ask whether our average politicians and, still more, our average journalists are not foolishly under-rating both the intelligence and the good will of their fellow citizens. It is not that the men composing the governments are themselves

less intelligent or less high-minded than the average : they are possibly rather the reverse. It is not only that they are beset by the traditions, the vested interests, the ways of thought, of the Independent Sovereign State, and know that they depend for success or failure entirely on the votes of their own nation. What they have failed to see is that even in seeking solely for the votes of their own people they are aiming too low. Man does not live by bread alone ; and nations have other sentiments besides selfishness.

I remember, in the early days of the League of Nations, when there was a dispute between Sweden and Finland, and Mr. Branting, the Swedish Prime Minister, resolutely refused to make any appeal to force, and accepted fully the decisions of an impartial tribunal, which proved not entirely favourable to Sweden. The Swedish newspapers and the journalists at Geneva proclaimed with one voice that he was ruined and would not survive the General Election. Yet, as a matter of fact, he was returned to power with the larg-

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

est majority ever known in Sweden ! The people were wiser than the politicians and journalists suspected ; and so are other peoples, if leaders will only appeal to their wisdom and not to their folly.

There is a rich harvest waiting for that national leader who will dare to follow his own better and wiser ideals and to appeal without misgiving to those of mankind.

Believe me, my dear President,

Yours sincerely,

Gilbert MURRAY.

**SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA**



TO MR. PAUL VALÉRY.

*Paris.*

My dear friend,

**T**HIS Eastertide I have been performing a self-appointed task, that of meditating on the role of the spirit in the modern world. It is natural that my meditation should take the form of a letter to you for I was thinking not so much of the Holy Spirit as of the Healthy Spirit which I fancy as that magnetism which flows from your piercing glance and from the electric bristles of your pepper and salt moustache.

You were moreover one of the first to think with me that it is precisely this question of the role of the spirit in the modern world which is at the basis of what, in the jargon of Geneva,



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

is known as Intellectual Co-operation. There, from the very beginning of the League of Nations, when I was only one of its acolytes, lay, for me, its real activity, and there, while politicians smiled, I saw the very soul of the Covenant, the idea which, in two or three centuries, historians will possibly consider as the most fertile of those which the first World Charter erected into universal laws.

For politicians, tied up in the immediacy of utilitarian problems, have neither the time nor the cast of mind required to deal with the deeper causes of the ills they desire to cure. Does one ask a doctor struggling at the bedside of the patient with some acute disease to discuss the social and hereditary causes which have brought his client to the nursing home ? But those "for whom work is joy", the bees of the mind, have other leisures and other duties, and when their glance falls on the modern world, it comes from far enough away and it sees sufficiently clearly, to enable them to conclude that your prophecy is

fulfilled even as your *Serpent* would have wished :

*From it will fall fruits of despair,  
And fruits of death and of disorder. (1)*

Of disorder especially. The human mind imposes order on nature. It brings the tumultuous evidences of the senses under a law. Men devoted to the things of the mind suffer constantly therefore in their innermost being from the contrast between the intuitive order which they carry in their heart as an archetype and the disorder outside which is like a cruel parody of it. It is not here a question of the magnificent play of natural forces but rather of that entanglement of international, national and personal anarchies, anarchies of ideas, customs, beliefs and doctrines, that serpent with a thousand heads and a thousand bodies which surrounds the individual on all sides, pressing in on him, paralysing his intelligence and his will by the multiplicity of

(1) Ebauche d'un Serpent.

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

appearances and possibilities it opens before him.

How far away it seems, the fair time when Europe was a Society of Christians, governed by an infallible Trinity and administered according to a Code of Ten articles, short, perfect, and workable thanks to the safety-valve of pardon. Undoubtedly things occurred which to-day we should describe as "grave problems", but they rarely disturbed the Christians since it was understood that this world was a Vale of Tears, and suffering an indispensable element in the subtle alchemy of eternal salvation. Above the variety of tongues and climates—for of nations there was still no question—the Christian world was diaphanous, free and homogeneous like the air of spring above mountain and dale. The western world turned on two fixed poles. Christianity, a certain and universal faith, and the Christian everywhere the same and always sure of his faith.

In that free and diaphanous world there came and went the "clerks". They moved

from Paris to Bologna and from Oxford to Salamanca without any particular feeling that they were travelling abroad, any more than they had when passing from Aragon to Castille, from Provence to Picardy, from the Milanese into Venice. Everywhere, beyond the vulgar tongues there was the same Latin to express the same established truths. Everywhere justice, law, morality, politics and economics, drew their inspiration from the springs of a uniform and certain theology.

Two historical currents came to break up that fair unity. The spirit of observation which had been latent throughout the Middle Ages, though probably more active than might at first sight appear, manifested itself on the one hand, in Bacon and experimental science, and on the other, in Luther and religious individualism. And then three regions of the West endowed with special powers of attraction—the Thames Valley, the Ile de France and the Castillan Plateau—created three powerful nations around them. Nations, new beings, powerful forms of human-

ity, active spirits which appropriated the individual, made themselves his masters, and were to transform Western life from top to bottom destroying Christian civilization.

With an historical intuition of rare depth, George Bernard Shaw has represented that dual evolution in his *Saint Joan*. For him, Jeanne d'Arc is the first Protestant and the first nationalist ; that is to say, I would add, the first individual to rebel against the Church and the inspirer of the first nation to rebel against Christianity.

Imperial Spain, is on the contrary the last defender of the old order. Charles V still dreams of Christian Unity. Vitoria, inspired by Christian principles, true and therefore universal for him, dictates at Salamanca his unforgettable lessons in which he strictly limits the right of the Prince (the Nation) to make war. But it is not enough to be right. One must be right at the right time. The wind of history blew against Vitoria, and Europe heard only the voice of Machiavelli. The interest of the Prince, therefore of the

State, therefore of the Nation, became the supreme law. The world, till then organic, broke up into independent units. Those immense and powerful beings, the Nations, rose up between Christianity and the Christian. They disintegrated Christianity with Sovereignty ; they crushed the Christian with absolutism.

As an organic unity, Christianity died for ever. The Christian as a uniform type disappeared when Luther and Calvin—without, incidentally, meaning to do so—opened the door to free opinion. But he disappears in a still deeper sense. The reign of royal pleasure, a corruption of Machiavelli's doctrine, in its turn corrupted individual morality, while science and philosophy, indefinitely increasing prospects already enlarged by Protestantism, plunged simple souls into confusion and delivered the more thoughtful over to the caprices of the individual intelligence.

Still, it was a period that could easily afford a little anarchy. The earth was still to be discovered, the sciences explored, techniques

mastered, industries developed. The enterprise of the navigators of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of the philosophers of the eighteenth, of the scholars and industrialists of the nineteenth, all this phase of expansion presupposed a national and individual liberty of movement, a fluidity of principles without which this mighty wave of history could not have gathered momentum. We can see it now as we look back, swelling majestically throughout that marvellous sixteenth century during which Europe overflowed with a life full of splendour, and throughout the seventeenth when it inundated the earth ; plunging, during the eighteenth, into the depths of the mind, to issue from them in the nineteenth in torrents of inventions, discoveries, colonizations, follies, prosperities, grandeurs and war.

Wars. What an immense wave of mud and heroism, of science and blood was this last war ! A last monstrous eddy in the thrice secular wave of history ! And the crisis in which we are struggling ; the feeling of being

engulfed, of being dragged down into the depths by nameless forces, is this the formidable ebb of the waters of history which, after hurling themselves menacingly against a pitiless sky and breaking furiously over our homes and hearts are now drawing back irresistibly towards some soulless abyss ?

Wreckage ! Are we merely pieces of wreckage ? We certainly look incoherent enough. What a vast madhouse our world is ! What disconnected gestures, what discordance of opinions, what hubbub ! In politics, democracy is discredited and after a century of endeavour—on the whole honourable—almost abandoned for systems in which the unknown is allied to the forgotten. Liberalism, forsaken just when some of its most extreme consequences such as feminism are triumphing, has to take refuge amongst the upper classes while the masses seek to liberate themselves in a negation of liberty. The pressure of technical and more especially of economic considerations, is eliminating general ideas, doctrines and convictions from political pro-



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

grammes. The parties merge into each other, divide, group and regroup themselves under the influence of a shortsighted empiricism, which principles irritate. The very image of progress, of that childish naive march forward, is blurred for modern eyes and seems to vanish into the sands of the Desert. A devastating psychology is corrupting behaviour and paralysing literature. Art, no longer subject to discipline, prowls disconsolate around the paradise of rules which it has lost. Science, reaching the limits of the knowable, declares itself powerless to explain the caprices of the soul of the atom, while at the same time a celebrated scientist becomes as popular as a cinema star by stating abstract truths, accessible to barely a few hundred mathematicians. That same science moreover is breaking up into *sciencelings* each going its own way, searching out partial truths, while philosophers, unable to embrace the vast circumference of positive knowledge, set up systems according to individual taste and to the set of notions which they happen to pos-

sess. Nations still dream of sovereignty though they are chained to each other by the bonds of economic life and at the very moment when the density of our movements and exchanges makes our bodies passive pieces of a universal mechanism, our minds give themselves over to an unbridled individualism which knows no other law than its own caprice.

A ray of hope ! What neither ideas nor beliefs could do, the force of circumstances may perhaps render at least possible. The world is, as it were, *set* by solidarity even though it be still unconscious of the fact. The furnace of the Great War smelted the nations down into one block. Debts, reparations, credits, commercial currents and currents of opinion, are so many bonds, so many vital "circulations" which are gradually uniting all those organisms that were the nations, once so proudly independent of each other, into one single animal organism. And like some nervous fluid galvanizing the whole, the ether and cables unceasingly transmit waves of news, of emotions, of hopes and fears which

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

are becoming more and more common to all humanity.

It is thus that under our eyes a new Society is being formed, a wider Christendom, a *civitas mundi*, less theological than the Christianity of the Middle Ages, less sentimental and abstract than the "Mankind" of our grandfathers. It is not based on the Hereafter but on the Here and Now, it does not draw its strength from feelings and opinions but from facts and necessities. For boundary walls it has "nothing but the earth" ; for inhabitants, men, races and nations ; for powers of moral creativeness, all the cultures ; for sources of natural creativeness, places and climates ; for guide it has reason, for faith the intuition of an order, that is to say the relatively modest dogma that God is not mad.

And here the role of the spirit in this modern world becomes clear.

The human mind, we have said, imposes order on nature. It is incumbent on it to discover and to define this order at which our faith guesses and which the mind itself feels

to be a necessity. As long as our outlook remained partial our notion of order was also partial, consequently precarious ; order on this side of the Pyrenees, disorder on the other. But from the day we define our boundaries—the whole earth—and our group—the whole of mankind—the possibility of solving the problem becomes tempting.

We shall, no doubt, draw inspiration from the past, conscious nevertheless of the differences that separate us from it. In the old-time structure of society, with its two poles, Christianity and the Christian, we shall find the surest model for the City of the World to build which is the true task of our time. Man. Mankind. Yes, my dear Valéry, I know that the word mankind is a beautiful abstraction, steeped in sentimentality, so that if one so much as touches it the tears run down. But, find me another word, you, magician of language. Until then I shall continue to use it to indicate, without emotion, the whole of mankind as it actually exists, understood as an organic unity, that is to say bear-

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

ing in mind mankind's present state and the allowances (to be discussed) which we must make for its evolution.

By this I mean—and here, leaving the definition of the problem I enter into the debate on its possible solutions—by this I mean that we ought to found the City of the World on the individual and on the human race, conceived as the two ends—I dare not say ultimate ends, but nevertheless the highest ends we know : the individual, in whom all forms are incarnated, without whom neither idea nor emotion may live ; and the human race, the endless canvas of history, the cloth woven from the innumerable threads of individual lives.

On that cloth are designs, of splendid colour and bold outline : the nations and the empires. They appear, stand out, blend into each other, become unravelled, disappear. The cloth continues. New individual threads take the place of those unwound off the skein. Other patterns, other nations, other empires, come and provide new variations which dis-

solve again into the grey of time. But the cloth goes on, an endless dream of the Maker of time, space and life.

It will be the task of the mind in the modern world to create a hierarchy in which those values—nation and empire—will find the places that correspond to their dignity and creative power without at the same time endangering the two main pillars of the structure, the individual and mankind. For the nations are beautiful and useful and, however paradoxical it may appear, they are noble avenues leading towards universality. It will be the task of the mind to purify them of the savage gregarious instinct, to which, undoubtedly they owe their survival through the period of cannibalism they are only beginning to outlive. For let us not forget that if individual human beings shudder at the idea of cannibalism, those collective human beings we call nations have practised it in the past and would, alas, practise it again to-morrow, would not hesitate to devour each other. Here then, as everywhere when it is a question

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

of men, the effort of the mind should be directed towards the evolution that raises the human spirit from the animal to the angel.

Order. Hierarchy. Can we hope to attain to these without a heroic effort to achieve a synthesis of our most essential ideas about life and its ultimate aims ? Do not be alarmed. I have no new gospel beneath my Voltaire and I do not mix up Salève and Sinai. Besides, it seems to be evident that the new world can only see religion as the partial image of that universal truth which, wisely adapted to space and time circumstances, can be made accessible to every race, epoch and nation. But over and above all these relative views and without claims to an absolute synthesis, will it not be necessary to establish a simple short Code of universal principles with regard to mankind, to be explicitly recognised as compulsory for everyone, everywhere, and which, taught in the schools, may become the basis of a new morality ?

In my opinion the first task to be undertaken with a view to the City of the World

should be to define these extremely simple principles which should enable us to provide a framework for individual, national and commercial action. It would give mankind a common law, a solidarity, and, in a way, a moral consanguinity which would make of the human race one vast family.

This is a precise task, relatively simple in theory, extremely complex in performance. For it is not a question of drawing up a synthetic decalogue and promulgating it. It is, first of all, a question of trying to get at the most general and most essential things so that, when we dig deep, we may reach the human stratum which is common ground for all races. And then—a much more difficult thing—the method itself must be a kind of “promulgation” ; the quest must be the end ; the world, in fact, must be with us in our endeavours to convert it.

I should like to see the Organization of Intellectual Co-operation as the mother cell of a whole field of fermentation of minds tending towards unity, order and hierarchy. I



## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

feel that to be its essential task—I had almost said its only task. As a result of its continuous and methodical action, we might gradually see a powerful architecture of ideas rise before our eyes, a solid framework of freely accepted duties, of obligations about which there would be no divergence, binding individuals to nations and nations to organized mankind. And parallel with this, as the effort towards a synthesis would have a bearing on the world of positive knowledge and of speculation, so it would tend towards a closer organization of techniques and sciences, towards a concentration of philosophies. The problem of man and of history, that everyday drama, that dialogue of action unceasingly played by character and destiny, would have for its background a precise, clearly-outlined and vigorous unity instead of the anarchy against which it is projected to-day. In a word, we should live in the bosom of a universal culture.

Need I say, especially to you, a free and creative mind, that it is not part of my idea

to enslave the supreme gift of nature in any way whatsoever even to the highest and most necessary tasks. Besides, can that be done ? No. Creation will always remain in its essence a free act, free even in relation to the creator. But the day when, by that dual effort towards a synthesis which I have suggested to you, we shall have succeeded in laying down at least the main lines of a universal culture, of a hierarchy of values founded on a universal basis as precise as that in which our ancestors lived during the fair period of the great European culture, on that day, it seems to me, the artists, who to-day flee away from the centre, which they feel to be empty, to seek for originality through odd and frivolous gestures on the periphery, will find themselves drawn towards a more austere science of things, towards the sources of all originality, towards, that is to say, the true Origin. Art will shed tinsel and gain in dignity. The artist will be more like that great figure who, in these days, is present to all minds, the great creator, who was not

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

merely the first great European but also the first man fully to attain to the height, the consciousness and the responsibility of this fair destiny : Gœthe.

Here then, my dear and great friend, are the reflections suggested to me by a subject that, I know, interests you in the highest degree. If I have succeeded in precipitating a shower of sparkling crystals of thought in the rich liquid of your mind I shall not have lost the few hours stolen from my official duties during those days that are called, I have forgotten why, the Easter Vacation.

Salvador DE MADARIAGA.

PAUL VALÉRY



TO MR. SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA.

*Paris.*

My dear friend,

YOU have sent me a meditation on the mind which is full of mind—and wit. For it to have been written, it was necessary that the sum total which constitutes you, which makes you a specifically European figure, should have materialized. To combine in oneself in the liveliest and happiest fashion the savour of the country of Cervantes, the precise qualities of the *Ecole Polytechnique*, the traits that cling to Oxford and the undefinable something of universal and yet familiar that is to be breathed only at Geneva, is to be specifically European in the rarest degree. If one were to pose the problem of fashioning a mind that included all the

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

elements I find in your mind to a manufacturer of brains, he would possibly be as embarrassed as the great scientist to whom I once said : « When you really know chemistry we shall be able to ask you the formula for a body that will have at the same time the transparence of glass, the softness of silk, the elasticity of rubber and the hardness of steel... ».

However, the problem has been solved and I may invoke your own existence in relation to the questions that preoccupy us and about which your letter has come to set me thinking. It has perhaps sufficed you to consult your intimate self and to feel yourself as the resolution of a given dissonance, to conceive that it is not at all impossible to find the unity in a diversity and the principle by which the very different sensibilities, cultures and ideals whose variety defines and whose antagonisms convulse Europe, may be brought into accord. That principle is belief and trust in the mind. By "mind" I mean here a certain *power of transformation* that (more

or less happily) intervenes and resolves, or attempts to resolve, all the problems with which man is faced and from which his organic automatism has not the knowledge or the capacity to deliver him. When reflexes, simple memory, habit and routine are not sufficient to bring us out of a difficulty, *mind* comes into play, goes over the given factors, dissociates, associates, varies and multiplies imaginary attempts, establishes connections, simulates liberties, operates substitutions—in short, *works* according to its means in order to furnish us with something that shall determine our action, appease our anxiety and bring us back to the most equable spirit possible. (Not that it always succeeds or that it does not sometimes add to our ills! Does not the heart itself, when it accelerates its beats excessively for the defence of the organism, only put it in greater peril ?) Is it not therefore natural in the presence of the generalized disorder, of the insufficiency of known expedients, of the novelty of situations to which there is no resemblance in history, to



turn to that power of mind, soliciting it more energetically and more rigorously, and to postulate this : *that if we had more mind and if we gave mind more place and more real power in the things of this world, this world would have more chances of being re-established, and of being re-established more promptly.* I assure myself that want of intelligence and restriction of the authority of intelligence are the most real and most redoubtable *vices* of our condition. George Meredith, in a well-known poem, prayed for more brains in women. "More brain, O Lord !" he said. That is what we must pray that Europeans shall obtain. They have thrown themselves into a prodigious adventure which consists in modifying the initial, the "natural" conditions of life, not any longer so as to correspond to certain wants and limited necessities of that same life (as was done some centuries ago), but as though inspired to create an entirely artificial form of existence, a type of beings whose ever-increasing means of knowledge and action demand that they should *deliber-*

*ately and systematically bring all they know and can do to bear on what they are.* Here we are then, entered upon an era of rapid transformations and essential instability. To give a precise meaning to the word "rapid" all that is necessary is to count the number of ideas successively accepted and abandoned during the last forty years with regard to art, science and politics—and the number of technical innovations of the first order too.

A most simple image represents that phase of acceleration for me : during some thousands of years the mind had here and there taken fire at odd hearths, scattered casually over the globe. The fires were maintained with difficulty and were frequently put out. They were isolated from each other and gave out less flame than smoke, less of useful heat than unequal spurts of light. But at last, the greater part of the human world being gradually warmed, the fire has caught everywhere : everything is flaring up, crackling, entering into fusion, and things that appeared solid, eternal, well separated from each other,

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

are changing their state prodigiously. It seems as if nothing can hold, nothing can last or keep its shape in the midst of this loosed energy in which, every instant, one sees the elements and systems of the old world, contradictory principles and the most opposed activities entering into alliance, disuniting, combining and breaking up in a delirium of *disso-ciation*. The interchange of *dreams against real* and the interchange of *real against dreams* are as if furiously accelerated...

Observe how to-day everything instantaneously engenders its contrary and how nothing distinctive is able to maintain itself in the fantastic temperature. War is present in the midst of Peace. Want is born of Abundance. The astonishing progress of communications has for immediate effect the raising up and stiffening of Customs barriers. In the same laboratory the same man seeks what will kill and what will save, cultivates good and evil. Even in the domain of intelligence it is to be noted that logic applied to the nature of things leads to a principle of

indetermination. It must also be admitted that the multiplication of books and instruments of thought has produced hitherto unknown forms of ignorance. Modern man has rarely anything but newspapers for the nourishment of his mind : he only finds in them what the thought that has any care for itself must fly from.

What an epoch it is with all the serpents of the universe biting at their own tails ! Will there ever again be anything in the world—a way of living, or of thinking, or of working a round of days, a condition of existence—that will not be at the mercy of a discovery, an invention, a telegram, a reflex or a vote ?

But to perfect the notion of this extreme disarray it should be added that the unchained fury of transformation works *unequally* on the sum of human things.

Whereas the material of life (and life in so far as it depends directly on that material) is immediate prey to the profound and prompt modifications that we know, on the other hand the fundamental conventions of society,

morals, civil law, public justice, the essential notions, entities and myths that we understand by the terms, *Morals, Politics and History* remain outwardly almost intact. They are all more or less depreciated in the eyes of the intelligence that is ruining their metaphysical substance ; but they preserve their practical and even their affective force. One might put it that they are losing their meaning while keeping their strength.

The whole political structure in particular, and the kind of political action that that structure imposes are as little as possible adapted to the present state of civilized humanity, to the ideas that civilized humanity is able to form of itself and of the full employment of its means of action. The division is immense between our habits, our institutions, our legislation, even our sensibility, and what we know or may come to know, what we can do or may wish to do.

It should be clearly realized that our politics for those who shape them reduce themselves to the invention of expedients. I quite

agree that, in the past, projects on a grand scale, far-sighted plans, might be conceived, and that it has happened that certain states, divers great men and some powerful institutions were able to arrive at durable and sufficiently *real* results through the depth and consequence of their views, their energy and their discrimination (and, incidentally, of their luck too). We may allow a certain wisdom, prevision and strategy to Machiavelli, for in his time it was not unreasonable to reason, or absurd to foresee, or hopeless to think of calculating results. But our world demands that we resolve infinitely complicated problems in an infinitely short time. With us everything reacts on everything and from every distance ; and there is no question that is not capable of being utterly transformed in a few *seconds*. Our epoch does not suffer through delays ; it disposes of organs of immediate transmission and amplification that are of literally formidable power. The greater the importance of the interests involved, the more urgent the needs, then the less are leisure

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

and calm for reflexion allowed to the people who seem qualified to deal with them. We see decisions mixed up in the most capricious way with the most complicated technical studies and at the same time with the more or less vulgar opinion of the masses...

Technique, study, rigour, control, order and precision on the one hand, and, on the other, expedience, verbosity, illusion, divers superstitions of philosophic or historical origin, party prophecies, childish fancies, impulses, suggestions, more or less disguised appeals to cupidity, to bestiality—in short, the deployment and the domination of psychological products of inferior quality... such is the comparative chart showing the elements of the contrast of which I speak and which may be expressed in the following form : Whereas the relations between man and his physical environment have become more and more precise and more and more advantageous, the relations between man and man are still dominated by a detestable empiricism and are even marked in several ways by a very

appreciable retrogression. I do not want to speak here of morals or manners, of ways of life, of language, of the hierarchy of values, or to dwell on the incoherencies and absurdities that a modern brain has to put up with in regard to what it sees and reads... But I should insist on the fact that practical life is more and more penetrated by customs and considerations that applications of positive methods (employment of machines, measurements, etc.) impose on it : minds are rapidly, although insensibly, accustoming themselves to a mode of existence that presupposes a certain "scientific" conception of the physical universe.

But that practical life in so far as it necessitates relations between men (economic, political, juridical...) is entirely directed by notions, entities and associations of every age and every origin, and which, for the most part, would be very difficult to justify. We should find that they imply several *ideas of Man* that are mutually contradictory and that they are all very much different from the *idea of*



*Man* that a present-day enquiry, deduced uniquely from verifiable facts, would allow of our forming.

Everybody agrees tacitly that the *man* of whom there is question in constitutional and civil law, he who is the tool of the speculations and manœuvres of politics—the *citizen, the voter, the candidate, the tax-payer, the justiciable man*—is not perhaps quite the same *man* that present-day ideas on matters of biology or psychology would allow us to define. From this, strange contrasts result, a curious division in our judgments. We consider the same individuals capable or incapable, responsible or irresponsible, according to the fiction we adopt on the instant, according as we find ourselves in juridical circumstances or in the objective state of our faculty for thinking.

And yet all politics, even the most simplified, reduce themselves to a speculation on man, to reasonings and to a kind of action which have men and systems of men for material. The means of that action are fic-

titious but its effects are real enough—are only too much so in some circumstances. Those are powerful fictions that guide the world, but, however powerful they be, an attentive examination of them shows no more than a mythology that is incoherent in formation, wherein popular, metaphysical, administrative, legendary, theoretical and pragmatic elements are mixed up together—a confusion of sentimental motives, of appetites, of ideals, of false memories. All this was admissible, tolerable (and, as a matter of fact, indispensable) *in the days of vagueness and slowness*, in that blessed time when one might believe in the teachings of history (that is to say, in childish causality), draw food for thought from the facts of the day and material for projects from the future. Now, for more than one observer, all this becomes well-nigh impossible to consider without a sort of nausea...

I confess that the spectacle of the political world turns my stomach. No doubt I was not intended to look that way. I would very

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

willingly abstain from looking if the state of things, the universal mechanism, did not force everyone into the sad role of a *sound-box*. We must submit to all the cruelties that the intensive and organized disorder inflicts on thinking minds. The newspapers and the wireless bring the street and its happenings with their tumult and their incoherence into our very rooms. The walls shout and at night letters of fire on what remains of the darkness would teach Balthazar that MANE is a tavern, THEKEL a cinema and PHERES an eight horse-power.

That is how we should regard "politics". It is impossible to any man accustomed to some rigour not to notice that the great complaint from which the world is suffering to-day, the general anguish and the false balance between war and peace, which make it feel so deeply disturbed, has as its principal cause the resistances that conceptions or fictions shaped a very long time ago oppose to the moving of the existing balance towards a state of human affairs conformable to the new con-

ditions of life. We must fully recognize that nobody to-day, statesman or political and economic theorist, is capable of grasping the complexity created by the very rapid development of communications of every kind over the globe, or to foresee the reverberations of the very short maturing of events. Every act, however deliberate it may be, is no more than the cast of the dice. All acts have the value of "a scrap of paper". It is what I meant just now in speaking of expedients. In a world that we have completely explored, circumscribed, organized, we feel ourselves blind and powerless, though we be fully armed with facts and embarrassed with immense resources, and we do not know how to accustom our sentiments and our thought to this new world. The past, almost wiped out in the scientific and technical order, weighs terribly on the peoples. It encumbers our destinies with a quantity of historical hypotheses and we cannot picture to ourselves *what is, as it is*, without mixing with the real a crowd of notions, apprehensions, repug-

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

nances, associations, evaluations, formulas and tendencies in which and by which *what will never be again* is imperiously active...

Nevertheless we must learn to prepare the real in its pure state. In at least some minds it will change the whole of politics. Those (if there remain any) who still have leisure to think ever more closely into things and who have the means of doing so without regard to the bearing of events on their situation and functions, ought perhaps to give some part of their precious time and their most discriminating attention to doing what statesmen, or those who occupy the places of statesmen are not, for lack of freedom or through being unaccustomed to considering problems apart from their own power or glory or feelings or interests, capable of doing. *I regard the political necessity of exploiting all that is basest in man in the psychical order as the greatest danger of the present time.* Hostility between nations derives of necessity from a very limited number of persons, for the nations themselves are political ideas or

entities which can only be clearly conceived by men of a culture sufficiently great and imagination sufficiently strong to identify and personify systems of millions of beings of whom the types and the interests are very dissimilar, where not actually antagonistic, beings who, within a settled boundary, at a given period, live through events and conventions that are variable from century to century. The politics that are called "external" are in reality the play of the relations between these minorities, of their feelings, their memories, their plans and their different ambitions, and it is easy enough to see that this traditional play which is more and more opposed to the development of the consequences of the modern transformation of the world, demands more and more the division of the individual against himself and of civilization against itself. There is no escaping the impression of a *factitious fatality* that is pushing humanity in the direction of conflicts that can have no issue and no other possible results than the destructions of every kind

## A LEAGUE OF MINDS

that they guarantee. However cruel they may be, their cruelty will pale beside their stupidity, for the vanity of their effects, apart from the suffering they must entail, could have been foreseen, and, besides, it will appear that these outbreaks imply total and hopeless rejection of the resources of the mind. The transformation of the human universe renders solutions by violence incalculable, and therefore stupid. There, perhaps, is something that it would be good to make understood, without the slightest appeal to sentimental considerations. And so I return to what I started from, which was an invocation to the intelligence of men, and I repeat : *More brain, O Lord...*

When, at a meeting of our Commission one day in Geneva, I said that the League of Nations presupposed a League of Minds, it was nothing other than that I wished to say. Nobody understood better than you.

Paul VALÉRY.

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